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LETTERS FROM THE MARQUIS DE LAFAYETTE
TO HON. HENRY LAURENS, 1777-1780.

(Continued from the July number.)

[16]

Dear Sir

You will have certainly received a long letter from me by L^e Colonel du plessis, before this falls into your hands—but as I send a servant of mine to y^{or}k for several business's belonging to his province, I wo[']nt let pass this occassion of presenting you a n^{ew} assurance of my attachment—I schall mention in the same time two or three points relative to my glorious and flattering appointment.

I have received a letter signed Connway where he informs me under the most strictest secrecy of what he can no more conceal from me—he presents me that commission under the two points of view he knows to be the most agreable to me, the utility of this country of the american liberty, and my own glory—he assures me how happy he finds himself to serve under my orders—he swears that he feels a much greater pleasure to be under me than if he was commander in chief, two happy, says— he, if he can by every exertion in his power contribute in some thing to my reputation, and he begs, he

expects with great respect an answer. however, I have thought that even the most strict duty of politeness could indulge me to wait one or two days before answering to that honest gentleman.

We have, Sir, in this army a man who would be of a great use to me— more useful even to the northern than the southern part of your army— this is gnl portail— you will be surprised at my begging the chief of the ingeneers, to be merely in a detachment of general washington's grand army— but I pray you'd reflect that (without mentioning any fort) if I meet with some good luck, I can hope to have the pleasure of waiting you *from camp before quebec* and then it will be the true business of the chief of your ingeneers to take the only one fortified town to be taken, or at least the strongest one of america—(I don't include S^t. augustine because gnl connway will take it with fifteen hundred men coming from M. de borre's country) gnl portail would be intrusted too with the care of making out, fortifying if necessary and distributing our camps— so I would divide the place of quarter master general and leave the other employments to a country man officer, an active friend of ours, pointed out near or upon the spot, and very well acquainted with Canada—

I must confess to you that I am waiting this after the most warm desire of Mr du portail, declared to me in the most expressive terms— he would take along with him the youngest of his ingeneers and leave Colonels la radiere and laumoy, and the new major villefranche with some other strangers to do the duty in general washington's army— I dare hope that such a plan would agree without difficulty with his excellency.

if I had that gentleman and the most respectable Mg dougall, I should be very happy —I want, my dear Sir, to have men whom I can extract from, as much pru-

dence and as many years, (without any sensible injury to theyr persons) as I believe there is necessary to fill up in my age, which years I think must have a general to be in his point of perfection— and it is my opinion that even when a man is born with those so superior and uncommon talents for the grand art of war, the best age for his generalship, after a continued study and experience is between forty and fifty.

Can I dare hope, my good friend, that Congress will add yet to his confidence and my gratefulness in granting me as much power as to reform abuses, punishing, or rewarding upon the spot, in all to establish that strict discipline which will give to the canadians a great idea of our justice, our strength, and our soldiership— I pray and I wish very heartely that I schall be directed to settle my plan and my business with the committee of Congress actually in camp—for the board of war, you know, is not in the interest of the friends to gnl Washington—I pray too that I schall after wait on Congress and its president to take farther instructions.

There is a point upon which I do not hear any thing this of monney— do'nt you think that gold is absolutely necessary— I'll tell you what I can make upon that matter and I hope you know too well my heart and my love for your cause for injuring me with any thanks—I have about Seven Thousand guineas of actual revenüe, I have an hotel in paris, I have in plate, diamonds, &c. about the double of that summ I can dispose of or make a borrowing upon— if Congress wants a warrant for borrow immediately that monney, from some stranger I schall give my name to it— but in case it was useless, then, Sir, I beg you would find for myself about five or six thousand guineas to borrow, which I am certain it will be necessary for me to spend from my own pocquet in liberalitys, pious charitys to clergymen &c &c. &c &c. and it is

only with the power of spending from my own that sum that I wish'd to undertake the expedition— if you could not find that I should be obliged to borrow those five thousand guineas at some foolish and ruinous *interest*.

The same day at 2 o'clock

When I was waiting this your letter and this of M. duer fell into my hands, and I see with the greatest concern that the two greatest ennemys and most insolent calumniators of my friend are directed to follow me, connway as second commandant, and duir as volunteer. the first you know my way of thinking for—the second has the reputation in the country to be a tory, and you'll know by several instances that he is a rascal—I tell you, Sir, freely, not as the president of Congress but to my friend that if it is not altered at least for the first I am obliged to decline the appointment—if they go there I am sure they will prevent my succeeding—if my endeavourings to do well are attended with such impassable obstacles, my hating cabals and cabalors will send me back to france—Mr de gimat is going to York. I tell him not to mention that I have received those two last letters even this of Connway—that Connway is so much despised by every honest frenchman that no body will serve under him—and those who do not know him yet, will be lighted on his conduct as well as I have been myself. what Mr de gimat will tell you, you can put the same confidence in as if it was myself.

le M^{re} de Lafayette

Endorsed: Marquis delafayette

Rec^d. 28 Jan^y 1778—

[17]

Dear Sir

if My business are done very early be so good as to give me notice of it to prepare myself to my departure.

to the reason that I do'nt seem to like the expedition you can answer that I like it very well and my propositions to you about the monney are a good mark of it.

for the baron de Kalb they must reflect that as the baron will go of with me he will not be more useful to gⁿl washington in france than in canada and by the same occasion the will loose gⁿl portail and all the engeneers gⁿl Pulaski, armand, du plessis &c &c &c

if my going there is not agreed upon immediately I'l resign this evening and the other french generals and officers will send theyr resignations in two days.

you can say too that I must set out immediately for france by the occasion of the man I had sent for bringing to me that frigate of 24 guns

if I go then I'l wraït to france a letter to my friends, one to the french ambassador, one to the members of the opposition in the two houses which I'l show you.

if no french officers as it will be go to canada then no canadians will join under that irish man principally when they will see us going of and publishing the reasons which dissify gⁿl washington myself and all the french officers, to whom congress has been so ungrateful.

Endorsed: Marquis de lafayette

31 Jan^y 1778.

[18]

Addressed: To
The President
of
Congress

At half past nine

I am Coming from that board—I spoke to them with a great frankness and finished by telling that if they do'nt give me mgdougall or Kalb, and the french officers appointed according to my ideas I decline the appointement

and will go to france with most all the french officers in the army—I am sorry my dear sir, to think that two or three rascals oblige me to make out such a conditions and take such steps—tho he was I believe for me, duer quite against, the secretary charmed with that dispute, and the old fellow scratching his wigg—I think they'l beg Congress to meet tomorrow tho' it is Sunday—then my proposition and my leave in case of refusal will be layd down in the worst light possible—I told them that such I wish would be my instruction from Congress “when you'l repair to camp you'l send in our name an order to general mgdougall to follow you, and you'l proceed to wards albany, but if his health do'nt admit then you'l leave to g^l washington a letter which upon mgdougall's answer he will deliver to the baron de Kalb to order him to go up—then I am certain to have one or another, and more certain yet to have the baron tho' I would like better the other,

if you are not so good as to make out before Congress will meet a little cabale in my favour, then I'l be lost and as I ca'nt go back obliged to keep my word in going home—at least I could give up directly my commission and be yet three or four weeks with his excellency as a volunteer

good night my dear sir, I am going to bed. be so good as to wrait to me or send for Mr de gimat when you will be here

L. f.

Endorsed: Marquis delafayette
31 January 1778—

[19]

Addressed: to
the honorable henry Laurens
President of Congress
at York

Dear Sir,

I have the pleasure to inform you that I have overtaken Colonel troop, tho' he was to make his incursion into albany with all the possible rapidity—as a large river was before him, no boat to cross and his escaping by any way entirely impossible, he surrendered himself to me, and the condition of our treaty has been that we should meet again at lancaster where he will take a letter for the inspector gnl of the army without inspection, and second commander of the incursion without any particular command—however the military postilion was very anxious to be at lancaster before me, which I thought it was kind to indulge him—I found at the same river one other rapid incursor from the board going to reading—and I'll go myself with all the imaginable rapidity to head quarters and from thence to albany.

there is a letter which I desire you would send to Mr de Valfort and from hence to france *but in proper hands because I speak of gnl washingtons business* I should be very happy if that old friend of mine would come again with me.

do'nt forget to put in the fire the little note I had given yesterday for remembrance in Congress—I forgot to ask you if I was to wait again to then for granting my desires but however I believe it is useless.

this letter will be delivered to you by Mr de la neuville coming from the french islands and recommended to me. if some other officers were sent to me or employed in the grand army be so good as not forget him. he is a quiet young man and I do'nt know better his pre-

tensions than his merit but I wish to show some regard for the recommandation. we schall mention him again in our letters. the other is a captain in the same regiment entirely unknown to me, but both are french men and I ca'nt refuse a letter for the president of Congress.

after reflection if valfort is not at charlestown and you do'nt find a quite sure occasion, let the letter be thrown in the fire

I desire du plessis schould be send to his business without delay I beg your pardon my dear sir of the impropriety of this letter, but I have only a minute, and I must make an incursion into the boat with all possible rapidity

with the most tender affection and highest regard I have the honor to be

Yours

the Mis de Lafayette

My most respectfull compliments to the ladys, I never drank a so good thé than this morning—indeed my dear sir you must have a great indulgence for me if you pardon *mon griffonage*

Anderson ferry at three oclock in a great hurry

Endorsed: Marquis delafayette

Rec^d. 4 ffeb^r 1778

[20]

Addressed: to
The honorable
the president of Congress
at
York town

Dear Sir

there is lieutenant Colonel fleury who not only out of my esteem and affection for him but even by a particular recommandation of the board of war is destined to follow me to Cánada—I schould have desired of Con-

gress every thing or employment which I could have believed more convenient to his wishes, had I not expected to see him before—you know he was upon my list—he desires to be at the head of an independent troop with the rank of Colonel—I do n't know which will be the intentions of Congress but every thing which can please Mr de Fleury not only as a frenchman but as a good officer, *and as being Mr Fleury* will be very agreeable to me.

I travel very slow, and I am angry against the roads, against my horse against every thing which stops me—however I am not so quite exasperated against a sweet parcel of letters coming thro the hands of Mr de Francis, which I have received very kindly—my family was then very well.

I was thinking of the title of that man going to Canada—I am afraid some body will call him commander in chief in order to excuse himself—but I desire it would be called only general and commander of the northern army—I do't say I will so much, but I say positively I will no more, neither any expedition which could hurt the commander in chief's rights.

I have showed to Colonel fleury the first lines of my letter, in order to let him know my giving willingly the recommendation he asks for you—you know that gentleman's merit and that du plessis and himself were made lieutenant colonels in reward for fine actions.

with the most tenderest affection and highest regard
I am dear sir

Your most obedient servant

the M^{is} de Lafayette.

Endorsed: Marquis delafayette

Recd 6th ffeb^y 1778

by Col^o. Fleury.

[21]

the seventh à five in the morning

Dear Sir

I am not yet out of camp tho' I did not loose a minute, but the roads and my business detained me longer than I thought—however I'll push now very quick and you will hear very soon from me—the bearers of those letters are two gentlemen whose the first is I believe intended by his excellency to be an ingeneer, the second wants too some employment—they were, say they, strongly recommanded to me by one other schip who was taken—if you see only one of those officers it will be a mark that the first schall be recommanded by his excellency himself—there will be also an officer de line already employed in our army to whom I'll beg you to say that I have mentioned him for going in the northern army—I can not be so hot for men unknown to me, but as french men I'll recommend allwaïs them and make the best wishes for theyr succi's—I am glad they could know that I have mentioned them—do'nt forget if you please the little mastinican who brought letters for me.

You have seen Mr de fleury—I fancy *entre nous* that he will not be satisfied in so high pretensions—he is very unhappy that Mr duer is no more in Congress because he is his intimate friend and confident—that will perhaps surprise you Mr de fleury is *entre nous* a fine officer but rather too ambitious—when I say such things I beg you to burn the letters.

I inclose here two lines for gⁿl gates. you will hear from me by the first opportunity—be so good as to pay my excuses to the gentlmen of my acquaintance in Congress whom time preventes me from paying a visit to—I have only this of presenting you the assurance of my warmest friendship & highest regard. I have the

honor to be with

dear Sir

Your most obedient servant

The M^{is} de Lafayette.

Mr John Laurens is in very good health—present if you please my respectfull compliments to your fine land lady and the most charming Miss Nelly

[22]

albany the 19th february 1778

Dear Sir

I intend to wraït to you as the president of Congress but now I will explain my heart to my friend, and let him know which hell of blunders, madness, and deception I am involved in.

it is impossible that things could have been turned up in a so little time, and I do not believe that an expedition which would have had some degree of probability could be immediately cut of on every point—therefore I am inclined to believe that people as been rather fool than wicked in this particular circumstance.

You will find by my letter to Congress how much I had been deceived, and neither words of honor, neither wraïting assurances, my travel to york my conversations &c have been able to prevent what I was much afraid of, it is my being sent with a great noise a schiaing apparate for what? for nothing at all—you will condemn, I am sure, gnl Stark's conduct, but you will be more surprised that gnl gates seems not so well acquainted with the northern department as myself who am here since two days—the immense number of debts, the want of cloathing, want of men, want of everything indeed to be wanted had not only been taken notice of by the future commander in chief of the american forces.

I have found a spirit of dissatisfaction every where, every eye seems to say to me, where are you going to

bring those unhappy wretches, let it be a natural or an infected disinclination, it is sufficient to ruin the expedition

I was expected in this town the 25—however I arrived the 17th—Connway has been here only three days before me—he was already very well with the three gⁿl officers then in Albany—but I ca’nt conceive how he could altered the matter at such a point in such a time, principally when *hazen* who has reasons to be, and indeed is very sanguine upon the expedition was to over look him—and that hazen himself acknowledges the expedition to be impossible by want of men and cloathes—there is in that ridiculous and schoking affair a piece of folly or a piece of villainy behind all expressions.

General arnold tho’ he was sick and not able to do anything had taken some notice of my coming to command here—I have wrote to him to day in order to ask his intentions about our present situation, and his commands as being by the date of his commission above me—he his an inveterate ennemy to gnl gates and calls him *the greatest paltroon in the world* and many other genteel qualifications of that kind.

What is your opinion, sir, about my present situation? do you think it is a very pleasant one? how schall I do to get of from a precipice where I embarked myself out of my love for your country, my desire of distinguishing myself in doing good to America, and that so fulle opinion that there was in all the board of war some feeble light of virtue or common sense—my situation is such that I am reduced to wish to have never put the foott in America or thought of an american war—all the continent knows where I am, what I was sent for, I have wrote it through the whole france and europe (as I have been expressly desired) the whole world has theyr eyes fixed upon me, and me, myself, I’l be obliged to end an

operation which may be looked on as undertaken, in the same ridiculous way as I do'nt know which man by the name of general had carried on one in the casted men will have right to laugh at me, and I'll be almost ashamed to appear before some, because the such a one is a fool, the such a one is a rascal—no, sir, this expedition will certainly reflect a little upon my reputation, at least for having been too confident in men who did not deserve it, but it will reflect much more upon the authors of such blunders— I'll publish the whole history, I'll publish my instructions *with notes* through the world, and I'll loose rather the honor of twenty gattess and twenty boards of war, than to let my own reputation be hurted in the least thing.

I was very glad and quiete with my division, but now, sir, as by the impulsion of many in and about Congress I have wrote to my friends that I had the command of an army, an army must be given to me at the head of which I could do something to throw a schade upon this very disagreeable part of my military life—unless leave schould be granted me to go and laugh in france of the niew military american ministry of war—however if you can give me a good reason for coming back to my first military post with any decency I have no objection to it—but if you think that the noise my letters and these of all the other french officers will have done in europe, that the expectations of every one in america, the expectations of the british army must not end in this schort and laughable Manner, then, sir, you can enable me to show that I can be at the head of an army and that I can conquer when an army is to be found.

I can not give up all ideas of penetrating into Canada, but I give up this of going there this winter upon the ice I will take farther informations, I'll try farther exertions—I confess that I am exasperated to the utmost

degree, and was I certain to carry the least point, whatever might happen, I should go on—but, sir, you'll see such a difference between what was promised to me and what I have found, that indeed nothing appears to be done—you know that the whole expedition has been put on foot in order to satisfy one single man's ambition. the behaviour and *underhands* of this man here I cannot conceive, neither understand yet; but he is well with every body and the most inveterate ennemys of general gates. I must not forget mentionning to you that arnold has desired me to take the command here.

there is a project which could make honor to myself good to the country, and mind a little the business—it is if I was directed to go with a part of the northern forces which I could then command to defend the north river or attack new york—that attack if it is a possible one would make a good diversion for gⁿ washington—is it true that gates is yet commander in chief in the northern department.

one of my aids de camp will call upon you two days after you'll have received this letter, be so good as to wait by him to me very *fully and very plainly* what effect my melancholy news have done upon Congress, what they have determined upon about me—as I do not believe they have in their power or they will to mind my ridiculous march by some glorious and fighting chief command I fancy *entre nous* that I'll be then induced to repair home—for you know my dear sir, every body will laugh at my expedition.

with the greatest regard and most tenderest friendship
I have the honor to be my dear sir

Your most obedient servant

the M^{rs} de Lafayette

I beg you would engage Congress to read over all the papers I send to them.

LETTERS FROM LAFAYETTE TO HENRY LAURENS. 193

I am told gnl putnam is not to stay in the post he holds now

Endorsed: Marquis delafayette 19 ffeb^{ry}
1778 Rec^d. 26.
Answ^d 4 March

[To be continued in the next number of this magazine.]